Maryland Council on Open Data Meeting Minutes

100 Community Place, Crownsville, MD 21032

March 16, 2018 | 10 AM – 12 PM

Introductions and Opening Remarks

   A. Mike Leahy, Acting Secretary of the Department of Information Technology and Chairman of the Maryland Council on Open Data, welcomed everyone to the Maryland Council on Open Data meeting.
   B. Patrick McLoughlin provided an overview of the meeting agenda and noted the continuation of a workgroup breakout session will commence during the first half of the meeting.
   C. Introductions around the room.

Organizational Structure Questionnaire Discussion

   A. Patrick McLoughlin noted that there will be more regular notifications when data will expire in the Open Portal.
   B. Patrick began a discussion about the seven questions that were first proposed at the December 2017 meeting regarding guidelines for the organizational structure of the Council.
      a. The goal of the questions were to introduce more organization structure or define it differently.
      b. The questionnaire was sent to all council members for review and submission of responses.
      c. Some answers were similar; whereas, others varied greatly.

Breakout Session

   A. Question 1 – Does open data make a difference? For example, should the Council perform (or require the performance of) independent validation of performance measures and verification of data? What is the case to be made and how do we make it (i.e., does it spur innovation, create jobs, improve public trust and/or generate transparency, and if so, how does the Council prove it)? Does the Council need to prove it?
      a. Yes, it can make a difference.
      b. When the Council first started the purpose, from the Governor's Office, was to get data into the Open Data Portal. Now, it is not as clear if that is still the main purpose.

    c. Discussion about adding Business Licensing Portal – now would be a good time.

    d. One person from the group said the Council should not be involved in validation. Others in the group were not convinced.

    e. Question about how one agency could properly validate another agency's data? He suggested the Council be a center for excellence and best practices.

B. Question 2 - Is it a priority to focus on making data sources public, or focus on the establishment of policies to promote openness? Can both be done within the limited time available?

    a. Both are important tasks.

    b. Inventory what data agencies are already required to report.

    c. Make connections with agencies' websites to brand that data as a precursor for the open data portal.

    d. Create policies to promote openness, quality assurance, security and governance.

    e. Good idea to share best practices.

    f. Give agencies guidelines on how to govern and post data.

    g. If data is already being put out by agencies, it would feel redundant on the open data portal.

C. Question 3 - What organizing procedures should be adopted by the Council (i.e., by-laws to address quorum, members, proxies, voting, etc.)?

    a. Voting procedures are hard to adopt because designees are usually in attendance instead of the Council member. It becomes a questions of – is voting really a critical task of the Council?

    b. Council should address what should be on the portal vs. what could be available to the public through PIA requests. We could recommend the portal not have information that can be received through PIA requests.

    c. Procedures have a lot to do with the structure of the Council. It is hard to build procedures when the organizational structure is unclear.

    d. Suggestion that the Council be a coordination and communication body. GOPI could decide what information be put into the portal then the agencies make sure they are submitting the data.

    e. Voting should be a tool to gauge the level of consensus among the group on a given policy, not a decision making tool.

    f. We don't need to vote – instead take information back to designees.

    g. Aggregate the opinions of the data users.

    h. How can we support transparency wihout unnecessarily exposing sensitive information?

D. Question 4 - What process should the Council follow to suggest/recommend changes to legislation?

    a. Suggestion to have it presented through DoIT's Legislative Liaison.

    b. Utilize a voting mechanism to present items to liaison.

     c. Preference would be to utilize a more seasoned liaison so recommendations have weight to them.

     d. Governance needs to be a priority first – you can't have a process for suggesting changes to legislation if you don't know what those changes are.

     e. Create a workgroup to look at how other Councils make decisions and recommendations.

     f. The Annual Report should not be the only time recommendations are submitted.

E. Question 5 - Should the Council set data standards (i.e., format, quality, frequency)?

     a. Yes, the Council should set data standards. However, they could also just set goals instead of standards.

     b. The Council should not be an extension of GOPI's work, but instead offer something different.

     c. Idea to not focus on input of data but on whether the data is useful, relevant, and meaningful to the users.

     d. Have Council preform a qualitative assessment of data quarterly. Vote whether or not the data being evaluated meets standards.

     e. Voting is not as effective as noting feedback on data.

     f. The Council should be promoting standards, not defining standards.

     g. DoIT should set standards regarding structure and format and GOPI should set standards regarding usefulness and relevance of data.

F. Question 6 - Should the Council recommend legislative changes requiring that all agencies "default" to releasing data and making that data available for free, if possible?

     a. All agency data, by default, is public.

     b. Applying the idea that all data should be public would incur a high cost on agencies in order to go through all their data and determine what can be released.

     c. Having a higher cost could lead to less people utilizing the Open Data Portal.

     d. Look at the kinds of data people want and then recommend those types of data be added to the portal.

     e. Turn it into a Procurement and have cost built in.

     f. DoIT could do a study on the types of datasets, benefits of data, and who uses the data.

     g. Charge organizations that request data that takes a lot of time and effort to collect, which will cut down on the number of requests.

     h. Let citizens have a op-out option for certain types of data.

     i. As new systems are built, make sure data is open and goes into the portal.

     j. GOPI will start looking at PIA information requests.

G. Question 7 - What is the Council's jurisdictional limit with other open data laws and departments within the State of Maryland? For example, does the Council's

reach extend to the Freedom of Information Act, the Maryland Public Information Act, and the Open Meetings Act? How does the Attorney General's Compliance Board and Ombudsman intersect with the Council's policy mandate?

    a. As the law is written right now, the Executive Branch would be the limit.

    b. Idea to create a three tier structure –

        i. Cabinet members for guidance and voting.

        ii. GOPI Staff to look at the data.

        iii. Agencies to maintain their data.

    c. Legislation needs to be changed to indicate new tier system.

Socrata Presentation

A. David Shames (Socrata) provided an overview of statistics, company information, etc.

B. He discusses success framework for customers and aligning products for customer use.

C. Examples of the types of services Socrata offers with examples:

    a. High Impact Projects

        i. Example: Dutch Transit Authority focusing on improving transportation and Socrata made data readily available.

    b. Strategic Value

        i. Example: Released Opioid Portal in Pennsylvania to gain awareness. Able to drive hyper-local resources through Socrata.

    c. Operational Improvement

        i. Example: Utah Department of Transportation

D. Resources are available through Socrata/ Maryland partnership. Support is available if there are issues when using the platform. Socrata communicates through DoIT to find parties that may be interested in classes and training.

E. Other pieces of Socrata:

    a. Capital Project Explorer to make data more relevant

    b. Open Budget to allow users to see spending data

    c. Dashboards – used Pennsylvania as an example

F. Socrata is working on unifying all products into a connected Government cloud.

Open Data Visualization and Capabilities

A. Mike Morello (GOPI) provided a visual presentation on how agencies can use the data in the Open Data Portal.

    a. The Portal is a self-service data warehouse

    b. There is a primer page for each dataset, which provides a summary of the data

    c. Datasets can be exported from Open Portal into Excel

d. When data is updated on Portal, you can refresh in the Excel spreadsheet and the data will update.
e. Tables and charts can be created with the data once exported into Excel

Closing

Meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting is ==June 15, 2018== from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm.